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THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

VOL. XV

SEPTEMBER, 1915

No. 12

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

The report of the meetings of the American Nurses' Association, which occupied all of the space of the August JOURNAL, gave but an inadequate idea of the San Francisco convention as a whole. The meetings of the League of Nursing Education and those of the Public Health Organization occupied practically the same amount of time as those reported and were, each in their way, of as great importance and interest. The report of the League meeting will be published in full, as usual, in a special volume and those of the Public Health nurses will appear in part in the *Public Health Nurse Quarterly*. No written report, however, can give any adequate idea of the inspiration and enlightenment which are a part of our great conventions. The spirit of the west, which is indescribable to those who have not experienced it, is beyond expression, but it was a striking feature of the San Francisco convention, as shown in all of the arrangements which were made, not only for the entertainment of the guests but in the administration of the meetings.

No more ideal meeting place could have been provided than the First Congregational Church, with its multiplicity of audience chambers and committee rooms. The afternoon teas, served each day at the close of the sessions by a committee of which Dr. Helen Parker Criswell was the chairman, gave an opportunity for sociability as well as refreshment, with the added charm of most delightful music contributed by many of San Francisco's leading musicians. These social gatherings were open to guests and delegates alike and gave a wonderful opportunity for discussing the problems that had been presented at the meetings.

There was much entertaining in small groups, by individuals, of eastern friends. Of the general entertainments, perhaps the largest and most unique was the dinner given at the Hawaiian restaurant in the Horticultural Building at the Exposition, following the Greek Theatre meeting, where guests were seated in groups of four and were entertained by the Hawaiian Band which rendered a most delightful programme of native music. Each guest, as she entered, had a lei (a garland) of yellow thrown around her neck; these were also worn by the musicians and gave a very festive appearance to the company as it was served by Hawaiian girls.

One evening a very attractive dinner was given to a number of the delegates by the Young Women's Christian Association in its fine new building. There were, of course, boat trips, trolley and auto rides, of which many availed themselves.

Two meetings whose proceedings will not appear in full in our JOURNAL were those held in Festival Hall and at the Greek Theatre. That in Festival Hall was held on the second evening of convention week and was under the auspices of the League of Nursing Education and the American Nurses' Association, Miss Noyes, president of the League, presiding. It was opened by a delightful organ programme by Dr. Maurice W. O'Connell. Probably many, like ourselves, had anticipated with great interest the address by Edwin R. Snyder on The Vocational Trend in Education, but his lack of appreciation of nursing ideals and what seemed to be his condemnation of all cultural education made his address a disappointment to many. Dr. Augustus Downing, First Assistant Commissioner of Education of New York State, under whose general supervision the Nurse Practice Act is administered, was in the audience and voluntarily gave an able and encouraging address in defense of higher education in its relation to the nursing profession, appreciation of which was shown by the interruption of constant applause. The medal bestowed upon the Association by the Exposition authorities was presented at this meeting and was accepted on behalf of the Association, at Miss Cooke's request, by Miss Goodrich, president of the International Council and president-elect of the American Nurses' Association. Miss Goodrich made an exceptionally brilliant address on this occasion in which she reviewed briefly something of the early development of nursing education and outlined the ideals which the profession hopes to attain.

The meeting held in the Greek Theatre at Berkeley, at which members of the American Hospital Association were guests, from which so much was expected, was something of a disappointment due to the absence of a number of the promised speakers. The very name Greek Theatre

brings up romantic associations of past ages but to those not accustomed to the California sun, the roofless theatre was somewhat trying, as the sun shone brilliantly with intense heat. A programme of very beautiful music was rendered and the redeeming feature of the meeting was the address by Dr. Henry B. Favill of Chicago. In this address, which was given without notes, he showed most sympathetic appreciation of the problems of nursing education and brought out the disheartening fact that in the past the great rank and file of our graduates have ceased to grow after leaving the training schools, that they have not studied or done public work, leaving a comparatively small number to become leaders, which is contrary to the professional ideal.

Another point he made was that in the training of nurses, as now conducted in hospitals, the lecturing and teaching is being done by internes or by young doctors fresh from their own studies, which makes what they have to give of little value from a practical standpoint. He gave it as his opinion that the very least the senior members of the medical profession can do is to assume that lecturing and teaching, in return for the service rendered by nurses in caring for the sick of the great institutions and in public health work. He said much that was interesting and of value, but these two ideas stand out in our memory from all the rest.

It will take a full year for those having the reports to study, to digest all of the ideas put forward. As usual there was not time enough for discussion and a strong feeling prevailed that we must be satisfied to present fewer subjects and allow time for their fuller consideration. It is still a question whether we have arrived at the most satisfactory manner of arranging the programme by using section meetings, so many of the members are interested in all of the questions presented and while attending one session must lose what is taking place in another, as we know from our own experience. We strongly advocated the plan of section meetings in the past, but we are coming to think that a single programme in which all of the departments are equally represented might give greater satisfaction to the majority of the delegates. The whole of a morning or afternoon session given up to one subject is exhausting to the most vigorous members and many of those in attendance have had their powers of endurance depleted by the arduous duties which they have left behind and the fatigue of a journey is added, for in whatever part of the country the convention is held, a large proportion of those attending it must cross the continent to do so. We plead for fewer papers and more time for free discussion.

Three subjects, none of them new, were conspicuous by the interest which they aroused. All of the papers and discussions on state regis-

tration were of absorbing interest. The subject of central directories was equally so and in the meetings of the League, which presented many interesting problems of the teaching body, that of the practical working out of the eight-hour law for pupil nurses as it is being enforced in California, was perhaps the most ably discussed. Mrs. Pahl of Los Angeles presented the leading paper. She admitted frankly that when the law went into effect she was prejudiced against it, but that she had honestly endeavored to meet its requirements and had reorganized her school accordingly. In the working out of the experiment she had become an enthusiastic supporter of this new idea in the training of nurses. Her paper, when it appears in the report of the League, will be studied with great interest. She was called to the platform to reply to a running fire of searching questions from the leading women in training school work from every part of the country and she brought out the idea, as she had in her paper, that the effect of the law is advantageous, that three complete shifts of nurses are necessary under her plan, and that with the shorter hours of work and longer periods of recreation the pupils were fresher and brought greater efficiency of service to the hospital. She laid particular emphasis on the fact that at the end of their three years' course they left the hospital in vigorous health, ready for outside work without a period of recuperation.

The all-important question in public health nursing of extending its benefits to people of all classes and especially to those of moderate means, was given a strong impetus in the symposium on possible amalgamation of visiting, hourly and household nursing, as it is being tried in Cleveland, Ohio.

The most valuable contribution to the storehouse of public health nursing standards which the National Organization is building was that of the standing committee on Organization and Administration, namely, a constitution and by-laws endorsed by a parliamentarian, and a code of regulations for the use of visiting nurse associations, with suggestive and explanatory notes.

The spirit of this convention was one of harmony and optimism, the feeling being that we are beginning to reap some of the reward of the hard work of the past, that recognition of state registration and of our post graduate courses is becoming more pronounced each year and that the nurse's place in the professional world is slowly being established.

Those who crossed the continent for the first time must have returned with an impression not only of the majesty of their own country but with a more hopeful outlook for the future of their profession. Probably few of those attending were able to give a sufficient amount of time to the Exposition to study in detail its wonderful representation

of the progress of civilization from our earliest history to the present time as shown in the buildings, the exhibits, the statuary, the paintings, the decorations and even the shrubbery, but they have an impression of a magnificent whole with its wonderful setting, the Bay, which will be a delight in the storehouse of memory for all time.

The convention at San Francisco and the Exposition, with their great interest, have not for a moment obscured the impression of our own journey, the crossing occupying five weeks, with its many opportunities for meeting new groups of workers, comment on which is reserved for a later time.

THE NURSE IN FICTION

Writers of popular fiction have run riot in the field of nursing of late. The pupil nurse, the graduate and Red Cross nurse are all in the lime light. The "White Linen Nurse," a veritable brain storm of hysterical exaggeration, appeared to our confusion and embarrassment. More recently we see advertised on all sides a "thrilling" story about to appear, we cannot now recall the title, in which a Red Cross nurse at "the front" inspires, in the noble and aristocratic breasts of both a French and German officer, whom she is nursing, sentiments of such deep and enduring nature that, as far as we could determine, the war is now raging on her account.

Then we pick up *McClure's Magazine* and are attracted by the unusual title "K" and find another story in which pupil nurses, frivolous and foolish, appear. We understand that Mary Roberts Rinehart, the author, is a nurse, now the wife of a physician. We all know that literary license up to a certain point is permissible, but it seems almost unthinkable that a woman who assumed the ethical responsibilities of the nurse with her uniform would use her sisters in a way to, at once, cheapen the profession and rob it of its dignity.

Quite the most daring excursion into this field, noticed in the same magazine, by the way, is "Miss Smith of Bellevue." The author lays her scene at historic Bellevue Hospital and puts into the mouth of one of the graduates from the training school, incidents so distorted and generally incorrect and damaging, that it would appear that the school had ample grounds for legal action. She generously describes the nurse as a "little simple" of circumscribed literary and musical tastes.

We have been told by good authority that one of the most distressing aspects of this matter arises from the fact that the author of the story was recently nursed by a graduate of the Bellevue School, a woman of at least thirty years of age and of considerable ability and dignity, loyal

to the point of enthusiasm and who, moreover, met the special qualification of having served as night superintendent and operating room head nurse. We understand that the author has disclaimed the personal application and states that she drew a "composite picture" which, of course, is refuted by the story itself. We should not expect a lay person to fully appreciate the ethical view point of the nurse, but we are at loss to understand how any person, particularly one who had been brought back to health by a nurse, could use information, harmful or harmless, gained under circumstances at once intimate and confidential, to the discredit of the nurse and the nursing profession.

What are we to infer from this "wave of nurse fiction?" Are the writer of the popular story and the magazines themselves simply looking for something new, unusual and interesting, and taking little thought of the injury they are doing? What mother would be willing to let her young daughter enter a profession where the whole question of sickness and disease and human suffering is portrayed as an exhilarating lark? What high type of woman would enter a school where, "stewed apricots, canned corn, stale bread and skimmed milk were served the year through to its nurses?" The day of this meagre diet is long since passed in the modern school of nursing. The field of nursing is so broad and fine and the need of cultured women in it so great, that we take it seriously to heart when reputable magazines are willing to publish spectacular stories so generally destructive to the ideals and standards of our beloved profession.

We can draw lessons from almost anything and one cannot help but conjecture a bit and wonder if the lowering of the age limit for entrance to schools of nursing and the general relaxing of discipline are resulting in lowered ethical standards on the part of graduate nurses in general, and whether they really are relating their experiences too freely. Dr. Osler says in his inimitable style, "To talk of disease is a sort of Arabian Nights entertainment, to which no discreet nurse will lend her talents."

The public and nurses themselves are very apt to "come back" on the school, quite rightly sometimes, but heads of schools and instructors cannot entirely rebuild character, nevertheless, they can do a great deal towards moulding and strengthening it. Theirs is a great responsibility and a great privilege. How much time is spent in the average school in teaching ethics? Does it consist of a few talks well towards the end of the senior year, or does it begin the day of entrance? How many probationers are given the Hippocratic oath to study? Are all graduates, even, familiar with its wonderful teaching? Committing the

Hippocratic oath to memory will not keep all nurses from being too easy with their tongues, but the study of the principles therein contained will help to teach them the dangers of too free speech.

ANNIE DAMER

The announcement of the death of Annie Damer will not be a surprise to many of our readers who have known of her long period of distressing illness. Miss Damer was probably as broadly known as any nurse in the country, from having served for five years as president of the American Nurses' Association and from her interest in all forms of public work in which nurses are engaged. She was of Canadian birth, having spent her early life in Guelph, Ontario; she was a graduate of Bellevue Hospital and became conspicuous in nursing affairs at the time of the Third International Congress in Buffalo, at which time she was chairman of the Arrangements Committee. She was then holding a position as investigator for the Buffalo Charity Organization and continued in public health work from that time.

Miss Damer was a member of the first Board of Nurse Examiners of New York State and was later its president; she was president of the New York State Nurses' Association for several terms and of the Journal Company. She took a most active part, always, in the affairs of her own alumnae association, holding various offices. An accident several years ago led to her retirement from active nursing work, but her interest in nursing affairs continued to the end. She was made an honorary member of the American Nurses Association a year ago.

Her interest, her good judgment and her counsel were always ready for those who turned to her for advice and she will be greatly missed by her many friends.

MEMORIALS

It was decided, at the recent convention, to establish a memorial to Miss McIsaac to be administered in connection with the Robb Fund in which she was especially interested, and as shown in the report, the Alumnae Association of the Illinois Training School of which she was a graduate and for many years superintendent, headed the list with a subscription of \$500.

The question of continuing to establish memorials for our deceased members was discussed very extensively among the members outside of the meetings. Every one was desirous of showing affection and respect for Miss McIsaac, but the question was frequently heard, How can we commemorate, by the establishment of funds, all of our pioneers

and distinguished members? Each has a group of friends who will feel that she deserves special recognition for the service she has performed in her profession. The death of Miss Damer at this time emphasizes this, for she gave years of public service which was as great as that of Miss McIsaac. In the natural course of events, one after another, the members of the first beloved group will pass away. Is it not imposing too great a burden on the affiliated societies to attempt to develop so many funds? We must either limit those already started to a lower figure than was first intended, or we must change the character of the memorials we make, adopting some plan which will not lead to such confusion of mind as is aroused by the creation of a new fund.

One of the many suggestions put forward at the convention was the necessity for the establishment of special central nursing schools where all pupils shall be prepared for hospital service—an old idea, brought forward in a somewhat new form. In the establishment of such schools, which we believe are sure to come, there would be an opportunity for perpetuating the names of our pioneers. For instance, such a school in Chicago could be known as the McIsaac School of Nursing, with the different professorships named for the leading women of that section, as they in turn pass over to the great majority. The New England school could be known as the Linda Richards School, with a Davis chair, a Riddle chair, etc.

Let the contributions of future generations of nurses be for the Relief Fund, the Robb Fund and for such strictly educational needs as from time to time the future may bring.